



MEMORANDUM

Date

1/9/04

TO: Dan Birch and Eric Kuhn

FROM: Jim Pearce

RE: Update on the Wolcott Reservoir Study

The Wolcott Reservoir study is just getting off the ground. Initially, we will determine how new water supplies at Wolcott could fit in with the study partners various water supply systems. If we can identify favorable operational scenarios, then we will proceed with basic engineering and cost estimates to better understand the project's feasibility. The technical folks are meeting on January 14th to discuss the preliminary hydrology and operational scenarios. Consequently, there is not much to report yet.

On a related topic, Kerry Sundeen and I attended a Colorado Department of Wildlife (DOW) meeting at on January 7, 2004 regarding the conservation plan for the greater sage grouse in northern Eagle and southern Rout counties. The Wolcott Reservoir site is considered sage grouse habitat. John Toolen, the DOW plan manager, invited us update his group on the Wolcott study and learn about the conservation plan.

The sage grouse conservation plan has been grinding along for several years. The goal of the plan is to implement conservation actions that will benefit the species. The DOW is trying to complete the draft plan by April 2004. John understands that the plans for Wolcott Reservoir are uncertain. He indicated that he would keep the plan flexible with respect to water development, recognizing that if a project ever did go forward, the detailed evaluation of impacts would be completed during the NEPA process.

Finally, John told us that there is a chance that the greater sage grouse could be "listed" under the Endangered Species Act. He said national environmental groups petitioned the USFWS in October 2003 to begin a "12-month finding" on whether the study of the action is warranted. I asked Kerry to spend a little time researching the petition process. It makes sense to get up to speed in case we need to get involved.